

# THE BRICK

QUEENS HALL ACTION ON POVERTY

## What is chaplaincy?

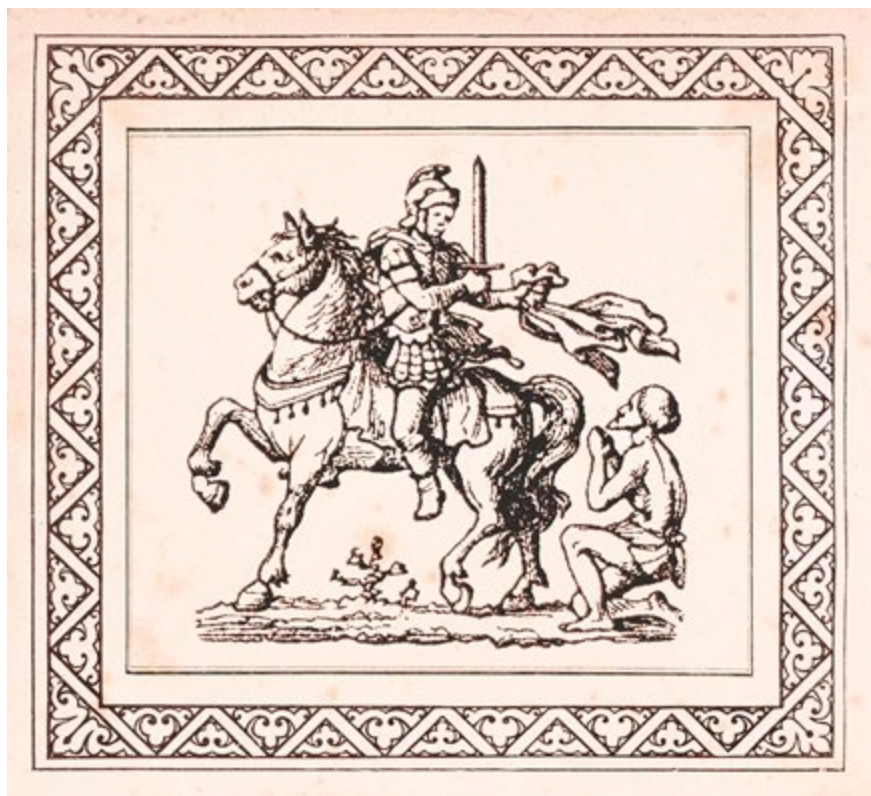


Chaplains are people appointed by the Brick to work in all of our sites outside the normal life of the congregation you maybe part of. There are chaplains in hospitals, workplaces, prisons, the armed forces, shopping centres, rural areas, colleges, universities and schools to name but a few. In all these places chaplains try to show God's love through offering care and support, and by representing Christian values and beliefs. Chaplains share the great privilege of discovering what God is doing out there - beyond the Church. In our diverse society, chaplaincy has to show the greatest sensitivity and respect.

Christian and other faith chaplains often work in ecumenical teams or alongside colleagues from other faiths. The Church has a long history of chaplaincy work going back to the time of the Wesleys and you will find Chaplains in some quite surprising places. Chaplaincy schemes may be supported and run by the local Church, the Circuit, the District or the Connexion, but there is always some sense in which the chaplain is "sent" by the Church. Chaplains usually work with the support of the Church and organisation they are part of – they are never alone. Our support at the Brick Chaplaincy is given by Emma Dickinson Lead Chaplain any queries please see Emma or email her at [emma.dickinson@thebrick.org](mailto:emma.dickinson@thebrick.org).

There are many different kinds of chaplains of all faiths and none. Most are volunteers - ordained ministers working full time as chaplains are very much in the minority. A Chaplain could be a visitor at the workplace like The Brick, hospital, part of a team who talk to the staff in the shopping centre or someone who meets with students and staff at the local College.

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## Chaplaincy is...

### **an ancient tradition**

St Martin of Tours ( 316-397ad) was a Roman Army officer who encountered a destitute man near the gates of Amiens and cut his army cloak (capella) in half and became known as the first capellainor chaplain. After ordination, he was commissioned to work away from the main church building in places where people were in special need. Buildings created for this special work were known as chapels!

So from the beginning chaplains have had a particular pastoral and practical care for people in critical need.

They work where people are not waiting for others to come to them and they are ready to make themselves vulnerable having only half a cloak left. Martin incidentally, began his ministry as a lay person.

## **part of the ministry of Jesus**

The Gospels have only a few references to Jesus being in the Temple and one of him in a synagogue at Nazareth. Apart from these, the ministry of Jesus is conducted largely outside the confines of the gathered community of faith. This is a context that chaplains recognise as they follow their call to discipleship, living out the gospel in word and deed, making real the ministry of Jesus in our time and place. Being mindful to mirror Jesus ways in how we treat and accept people we meet and not to preach the Gospel unless we are asked to do so.

## **in the tradition of John Wesley**

Our origins and self-understanding as a Church are essentially missional. Chaplains (amongst others) essentially have a 'sent' status - conferred by the Church or organisation they are part of - representative of the Church, Temple, Synagogue or Mosque and the whole Christian and all other faiths cause. Chaplains may have a prophetic role to speak a word of caution and to encourage reform - creating the kingdom of God



## **living and working in a plural world**

Most chaplains now work in a multi-faith environment as we do here at The Brick. This is not an option, it is a necessity and it can also be a blessing.

Most chaplaincy also engages with people who do not know the Christian story or have any structured spiritual understanding. They might be very cautious of using religious thought-forms or language. So chaplains need a special facility for such engagement. We at The Brick see multifaith all around us and will be accepting of this helping to facilitate prayer space as and when required

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### What do chaplains say?

- So what do I do? Well it's less a matter of 'doing' and more a matter of 'being'. Just being there in the ups and downs of life. *(Prison Chaplain)*
- At a time when fewer people have any kind of meaningful contact with a church it's a wonderful opportunity to affirm the presence of God in the world and his concern for every aspect of human life. *(Retail Chaplain)*
- The work continues to ensure on behalf of the Church, that all young people know that Christians do care about them and certainly God does. *(Youth Custody Centre Chaplain)*
- I joined them on a day's training. They placed me in a full size 747 and set fire to it!... 'Come and see' is the invitation by Christ (John 1) to go beyond the walls and discover new life. *(Airport Chaplain)*
- I gradually began to form relationships. It took time to break down the suspicion of paramedics who had not had much experience of chaplains. *(Ambulance Service Chaplain)*
- There are tears, there is empathy, there is togetherness across religious divides, there is God. *(Prison Chaplain)*
- Being an army chaplain is a great privilege, to talk to young soldiers, who will tell you things that they would not normally talk to a minister about. *(Army Chaplain)*
- Pairs of chaplains walk round the market and Shopping Centre every Thursday, offering a smile and encouragement. Retailers are now starting to trust and share in conversations with us. *(Town Centre Chaplain)*
- For us, it is a privilege to 'be there' and alongside others in their need and openness to God. *(University Chaplain)*
- Chaplaincy is not so much taking God to the front line, but rather disclosing his presence in the toughness of life and living. *(Police Chaplain)*

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All of this says that chaplaincy is a way for us to involve ourselves in God's mission to the whole of society and this is a huge opportunity.

Chaplaincy is also a slightly hidden ministry. Most people are amazed to find out that there are several hundred chaplains in the Church. The following areas of chaplaincy have been traditionally recognised, or have recently emerged, within Church: armed forces, schools, further education, higher education, healthcare, prisons, rural and agricultural, workplace, emergency services, transport, tourism and the tourist industry, town centre, elderly care, sports, young people, temporary (festivals, conferences, etc)

## Characteristics of Chaplaincy

*What makes a particular ministry a chaplaincy?*

Rather than giving a simple definition in a couple of sentences it is much better to think about what is typical of chaplaincy and look at some examples of what chaplains say about themselves. Not every chaplaincy will show all of these *characteristics*, whilst many Christian ministries which do not think of themselves as chaplaincies will share some of these features.

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### **Ministry beyond the walls - to where people are**

- "Chaplains are... the Church, Temple, Synagogue or Mosque that has left the building." (*Revd Dr Martyn Atkins*)
- "Nine out of ten people will not be in their area of worship on Sunday, but nine out of ten people will be at work on Monday and the chaplain needs to be where those people are." (*Airport Chaplain*)

It may not be strictly true that 90% of us are in paid employment, but the point is clear that there is a great need for Christians or chaplains of other faiths is to be seen and known outside of our worship and our faith community meetings.

Chaplaincy work takes Christian, all faiths and none pastoral care beyond the visible boundaries of the worship space, it is an invitation and an opportunity to go out into our wider communities. Chaplains seek to go out to people rather than wait for people to come to her/him.

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### **An invited guest and not the host**

Faith buildings usually like to play the host – we often think of mission as inviting people to come to us and be one of us. When we invite people to join us we may not realise just how difficult that can be. To come to our faith community can mean being asked to fit in with our ways of doing things – liking the same worship music that we like, being free to come to worship at the same time as we are.

However gracious, welcoming and open we are it can feel uncomfortable to come into a church as a visitor and a guest. The chaplain, however, is a guest invited into the school, the care home, the workplace, the shopping centre. Learning to be a gracious guest is a typical characteristic of chaplaincy.

- “Knock, knock  
I knock on the door and slide into the room.  
You look at me from your bed, wondering who I am.  
I look at you and smile, hoping to appear calm and friendly.  
I explain who I am.  
You look wary, but do not tell me to go away.  
I ask if I can sit down” (*Hospice chaplain*)
- “We are in other people’s territory following other people’s rules.” (*School Chaplain*)

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### **Vulnerable - not powerful**

When we are the hosts, no matter how gracious we are, we still hold power and make the rules. As a guest the chaplain has to give up power and be vulnerable. Chaplaincy is not an easy ministry: it involves taking risks and giving trust. Jesus “emptied himself taking the form of a slave” (Phil. 2:7).

Chaplains do seek to influence the organisations and places where they work but they do not have power to make things happen.

- “I enjoy the excitement of what chaplaincy can be... you have to be quite fluid and there is something reasonably unplanned and chaotic about the whole thing.” (*Agricultural Chaplain*)
- “Meeting their agenda before we seek to meet our own.” (*School Chaplain*)

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### **Commissioned by the Church or organisation you work for and accredited by the host**

Chaplains don’t act on their own authority, they are sent and supported by the Brick and in particular our Lead Chaplain Emma. There are many ways in which this can happen – some of them quite informal. Chaplains also need to be recognised by the host communities and organisations who receive them.

There are many ways in which Christians and members of all other faiths serve their local communities through acts of love and kindness. For most of these we do not need anyone's permission. Chaplains, however, typically need permission to enter – we have to negotiate access for chaplaincy to take place. Chaplaincy is a very public ministry. You can't just nominate yourself as chaplain to the local supermarket – it has to be agreed with the store management first!

The Brick Chaplains are to go to all workplaces and residences as and when required at St Georges, The Brickworks, Queens Hall, ABEN and Young person's Hub. This should be discussed with Emma Lead Chaplain before entering these areas.

- "I think Church affirms and helps me and then I take that back and take this into the chaplaincy situation." (*Workplace Chaplain*)
- "Come and live alongside us for a bit so that you are part of what we do not an add on." (*Headteacher talking about school chaplains*)

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**An intentional presence - rather than gathering** So much of Church or faith community life is about gathering people together – for worship, for prayer, for meetings or for service. It is quite unusual for chaplains to be able to gather people together for worship. Instead chaplains work by being a Christian or other faith presence, but this presence has to have a purpose. We must be clear about our intentions, about what we are here for.

- One RAF chaplain tells a story about attending a meeting at which targets for bombing were being discussed. The meeting decided not to bomb any of the suggested targets because of the risk to civilians. This was the first time in the campaign that one of these meetings had "turned off" all of its targets. Although the chaplain had not spoken during the meeting the commanding officer was left wondering how much difference the presence of the chaplain had actually made to the decision.
- "I want to be a blessing to the school." (*School Chaplain*)

Sometimes chaplains make a difference just by being there, but only when it is clear to everyone what the chaplain stands for.

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### **A method for Christian and all Faiths Mission- sharing in what God is doing in the world**

Chaplaincy is one of many ways in which we do mission. Whenever we do mission we are joining in with what God is already doing in the world. Chaplains try to do this in places where it is not obvious to look for God.

Chaplaincy isn't a role or an office for a few specialist people, it is a method or way of doing mission. This means that chaplaincy is very adaptable and works well in a variety of different situations.

- “It’s amazing to see the adaptability of chaplaincy. We can do chaplaincy in a place where people are screaming across at each other and shouting out the price of potatoes.” (*Marketplace Chaplain*)

Because chaplains are guests they are careful about the way they do mission, beginning with service and looking for opportunities to take conversations and relationships deeper. [Sports Chaplaincy UK](#) describes the work of their chaplains as “pastorally proactive, spiritually reactive”.

- “...the friendly face, the cup of coffee, the chat – all that lays the grounding for the deeper moments in life, which they will bring to you. You’ve no need to raise them - when things go wrong they’ll know where to find help.” (*Workplace Chaplain*)

## What makes a good chaplain?

### The Marks of Chaplaincy

The chaplain:

- offers ministry **beyond the walls** - to where people are
- is an invited **guest** and not the host
- is **vulnerable** - not powerful
- is **commissioned by the Church or Faith Base** and accredited by the host The Brick
- is an **intentional presence** - rather than gathering
- is an **authentic expression of Christian Mission and all other faiths** - sharing in what God is doing in the world.

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### Chaplains work in a variety of contexts:

- Chaplains are **pastors**: they need to be able to listen care and attention, empathise, understand, maintain confidentiality, and seek to be available to those in need.
- Chaplains are **interpreters**: they try to identify, understand and share in issues affecting the culture of a particular context and what God is doing there and to help the people there to understand God. This means winning the right to be heard and sometimes being in the role of critical friend, mediator, reconciler, speaking truth to power.
- Chaplains are **ambassadors**: they represent the Brick and the Church or Faith community they are part of, and they also report back to the The Brick about the new insights they have gained.
- Chaplains are **pray-ers**: they pray for the places where they work and when it is appropriate they pray with the people who are there sometimes creating new forms of worship for their context.



- Chaplains are **midwives**: enabling the birth of awareness of God in the place where they serve.
- Chaplains are **connectors**: they connect their faith with their context by being chaplains to all and demonstrate gospel and other faith values such as compassion and concern for social justice.
- Chaplains are **guests** in the contexts they serve, but often work by acting as hosts crossing bridges to provide hospitality, welcome and interaction with others.